

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
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S E C R E T STATE 303612

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: US, FR, IS, EG, AF, OVIP (PRESIDENT'S TRIP)

SUBJECT: SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH FRENCH AMBASSADOR

1. AMBASSADOR DE LABOULAYE CALLED ON SECRETARY VANCE ON DECEMBER 19 TO REVIEW RESULTS OF BEGIN'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON. ALSO DISCUSSED WERE THE HORN OF AFRICA, THE SAHARA, NAMIBIA, INDIAN OCEAN TALKS WITH THE SOVIETS, AND PRESIDENT CARTER'S TRIP TO PARIS.

2. THE MIDDLE EAST - DE LABOULAYE NOTED THAT FRANCOIS PONCET WOULD BE SEEING BEGIN IN LONDON. ANYTHING THE SECRETARY COULD PASS ON ABOUT BEGIN'S TALKS IN WASHINGTON WOULD BE HELPFUL. THE SECRETARY SAID THAT BEGIN HAD DISCUSSED

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TWO GENERAL ISSUES IN WASHINGTON IN PREPARATION FOR HIS MEETING WITH SADAT; THE SINAI AND THE WEST BANK. HIS IDEAS ON SELF-RULE IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA HAD APPEARED, IN PART, IN THE PRESS. ON SINAI, THE SECRETARY THOUGHT BEGIN AND SADAT WOULD NOT FIND THEMSELVES FAR APART. BEGIN WOULD GO TO EGYPT ON SUNDAY PREPARED TO PUT FORWARD LANGUAGE FOR A DECLARATION, THE TERMS OF WHICH WERE NOT YET COMPLETELY

DRAFTED, AND TO DISCUSS HIS PROPOSALS FOR SINAI AND THE WEST BANK.

3. ON THE ISSUE OF SELF-RULE, THE SECRETARY SAID THE ISRAELIS WERE STILL IN THE PROCESS OF FORMULATING IDEAS. BEGIN'S CONVERSATIONS IN WASHINGTON HAD, THEREFORE, BEEN PARTICULARLY USEFUL. HE HAD PARTICIPATED WITH AN OPEN MIND, CHANGED HIS POSITION IN RESPONSE TO SUGGESTIONS, AND HAD NOT APPROACHED THE ISSUE IN A RIGID MANNER. HE WAS CLEARLY FEELING HIS WAY FORWARD. HIS PROPOSALS, IF PRESENTED IN THEIR CURRENT FORM, WOULD NOT BE SATISFACTORY TO SADAT. BUT THEY COULD FORM THE BASIS FOR FACE-TO-FACE NEGOTIATIONS. BEGIN ACCEPTED THAT HIS PROPOSAL FOR SELF-RULE IN THE WEST BANK WAS AN INTERIM STEP TOWARD A MORE FUNDAMENTAL SOLUTION. THE SECRETARY SAID HE HAD THUS BEEN ENCOURAGED BY BEGIN'S ATTITUDE. A WALL OF DISTRUST HAD BEEN BREACHED. THE PARTIES WERE NOW SEEKING TO BUILD BRIDGES RATHER THAN TO FIND WAYS TO SAY NO.

4. DE LABOULAYE ASKED ABOUT SHARM AL SHAYKH. THE SECRETARY SAID HE THOUGHT THIS ISSUE WOULD BE RESOLVED. DE LABOULAYE ASKED WHETHER BEGIN HAD ACCEPTED THE NEED FOR A GLOBAL SETTLEMENT. THE SECRETARY SAID HE HAD. HE UNDERSTOOD THE DANGER TO SADAT IF A BILATERAL SETTLEMENT WERE ATTEMPTED. THE PRESENT THOUGHT WAS THAT AN ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN SETTLEMENT, IF AGREED, WOULD BE HELD IN ABEYANCE
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UNTIL A GENERAL SETTLEMENT WAS REACHED. DE LABOULAYE ASKED WHETHER THE ISRAELIS WOULD INSIST ON MAINTAINING THEIR TROOPS ON THE WEST BANK. THE SECRETARY SAID THEY WOULD, AND THAT THIS WOULD BE THE BIGGEST PROBLEM IN THE NEGOTIATIONS. THE USE OF UN TROOPS IN THE SINAI AND THE GOLAN WOULD NOT BE A PROBLEM, BUT ON THE WEST BANK IT WOULD. BUT SADAT WOULD WANT A UN PRESENCE ON THE WEST BANK. DE LABOULAYE WONDERED WHETHER ISRAELI TROOPS COULD BE INCLUDED AMONG THE UN FORCE.

5. DE LABOULAYE ASKED ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR A SETTLEMENT WITH SYRIA. THE SECRETARY THOUGHT ONE WOULD EVENTUALLY BE WORKED OUT. ASSAD HAD EMPHASIZED TO HIM THE NEED TO KEEP BILATERAL US-SYRIAN CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATIONS OPEN. ASSAD HAD SEEMED CONFIDENT, AND DID NOT WANT TO BREAK SYRIA'S TIES WITH THE WEST. DE LABOULAYE NOTED THAT THERE WERE REPORTS THAT SYRIA WAS SEEKING SOVIET ARMS FROM LIBYA. THE SECRETARY AGREED THAT THE SYRIANS DID NOT FEEL THAT THE SOVIETS WERE ARMING THEM ADEQUATELY. DE LABOULAYE SUGGESTED THAT, ONCE BETTER ARMED AND THUS FEELING MORE SECURE, ASSAD MIGHT BE BETTER ABLE TO JOIN IN THE PEACE PROCESS. THE SECRETARY RECALLED THAT THE HISTORIC PATTERN

WAS FOR EGYPT TO TAKE THE FIRST STEPS AND FOR SYRIA TO FOLLOW EVENTUALLY.

6. THE SECRETARY SAID THAT HUSSEIN WOULD NOT GO TO CAIRO, BUT THAT HE SUPPORTED SADAT'S INITIATIVE AND WOULD PLAY A CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE. THE SAUDIS WOULD ALSO PLAY A GENERALLY SUPPORTIVE ROLE, WITHOUT PUBLICLY ENDORSING SADAT'S INITIATIVE. THE GULF STATES WOULD FOLLOW THE SAUDI LEAD.

7. THE SECRETARY SAID THAT THE SOVIETS, DESPITE THEIR CRITICAL PUBLIC STATEMENTS HAVE MADE CLEAR THAT THEY WANT TO PLAY A PART IN THE PEACE PROCESS, THEY WANT TO BE KEPT INFORMED, AND ARE CLOSING NO DOORS. THE USG WAS KEEPING THEM INFORMED.

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8. THE HORN OF AFRICA - DE LABOULAYE SAID THAT THE DJIBOUTI PRIME MINISTER HAD RESIGNED. HE SPECULATED THAT HE MIGHT HAVE DONE SO AT ETHIOPIAN BEHEST, THE ETHIOPIANS IN TURN ACTING AT SOVIET INSTIGATION. HE ASKED WHETHER THE USG HAD SPOKEN TO THE SOVIETS ABOUT THEIR AIRLIFT TO ETHIOPIA. THE SECRETARY SAID IT HAD. THE SOVIETS DID NOT DENY WHAT THEY WERE DOING, AND ARGUED THAT IT WAS PERFECTLY JUSTIFIABLE.

9. THE SECRETARY RECALLED THAT AT THE QUADRIPARTITE DINNER IN BRUSSELS HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES HAD REVIEWED THE SITUATION IN THE HORN, AGREED IT WAS SERIOUS, BUT COULD THINK OF NOTHING THEY COULD USEFULLY DO. HE FELT THAT FURTHER THOUGHT SHOULD BE DEVOTED TO THIS ISSUE. THE ETHIOPIANS WOULD EVENTUALLY BE IN A POSITION TO MOUNT AN EFFECTIVE PUSH AGAINST SOMALIA. IF THEY BROKE THROUGH TO THE SEA, AND THE SOVIETS CONTINUED TO EXPAND THEIR PRESENCE IN ADEN, THE SOVIETS WOULD HAVE ACHIEVED A DOMINANT POSITION IN A STRATEGIC AREA. DE LABOULAYE AGREED, NOTING THAT THIS MAY HAVE BEEN BEHIND SOVIET EFFORTS TO DESTABILIZE THE SITUATION IN DJIBOUTI.

10. PRESIDENT CARTER'S VISIT TO PARIS - THE SECRETARY AND DE LABOULAYE AGREED THAT THE TWO PRESIDENTS WOULD WANT TO DISCUSS AFRICA, INCLUDING THE HORN, SAHARA, AND SOUTHERN AFRICA, EAST-WEST RELATIONS, INCLUDING ARMS CONTROL, THE MIDDLE EAST, NON-PROLIFERATION, AND ECONOMIC ISSUES. DE LABOULAYE THOUGHT THE DISCUSSION ON SALT, MBFR, AND RELATED ARMS CONTROL ISSUES WOULD BE MOST INTENSE. THE SECRETARY THOUGHT THAT DISCUSSION OF THE CURRENT ECONOMIC SITUATION WOULD ALSO BE VERY IMPORTANT. DE LABOULAYE SUGGESTED THAT THERE MIGHT BE TWO ASPECTS TO THESE ECONOMIC DISCUSSIONS;

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FIRST WHAT THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT CALLED THE NEED FOR AN "ORDERLY EXPANSION OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE" AND SECONDLY THE ERRATIC MOVEMENTS OF THE DOLLAR. THIS LATTER PHENOMINUM WAS HAVING A DETRIMENTAL IMPACT ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE. THE SECRETARY SAID HE WAS VERY MUCH AWARE OF THE

LATTER PROBLEM, HAVING BEEN APPROACHED ON IT BY THE SAUDIS. THE SAUDIS, HE SAID, HAD TOLD HIM THAT THEIR BEST ESTIMATE WAS THAT THE PROPONENTS OF AN OIL PRICE FREEZE WOULD CARRY THE DAY AT THE UPCOMING OPEC MEETING. THEY HAD ALSO SAID, HOWEVER, THAT THEY WERE CONCERNED ABOUT THE VALUE OF THEIR DOLLAR ASSETS.

11. NAMIBIA - DE LABOULAYE SAID THERE APPEARED TO BE SOME DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US AND FRENCH VIEWS IN THE CONTACT GROUP. THE US APPARENTLY FELT THAT ANY FURTHER EFFORTS WITH THE SOUTH AFRICANS WERE USELESS, AND THAT IF THE NEGOTIATIONS BROKE DOWN IT SHOULD BE BLAMED ON THE SOUTH AFRICANS. THE SECRETARY SAID THERE EVIDENTLY WAS SOME MISUNDERSTANDING. THE US BELIEVED THAT CONTINUED EFFORTS SHOULD BE MADE WITH BOTH SOUTH AFRICA AND SWAPO AND THAT IF THE TALKS BROKE DOWN IT WOULD BE THE FAULT OF BOTH. HE AGREED WITH DE LABOULAYE THAT THE TIME HAD NOT COME TO MAKE THE WESTERN PROPOSALS PUBLIC.

12. THE SPANISH SAHARA - DE LABOULAYE REFERRED TO REPORTS THAT FRENCH PLANES HAD ATTACKED A POLISARIO COLUMN. HE SAID THAT, WHATEVER THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER, THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT COULD NOT DENY THE STORY BECAUSE IT DID NOT WANT TO INDICATE THE ACTUAL LIMITS PLACED ON FRENCH FORCES. THE FRENCH WANTED TO CONVINCE THE POLISARIO AND ALGERIA THAT ATTACKS AGAINST FRENCH CIVILIANS WOULD BE MORE COSTLY, AND THE FRENCH PUBLIC WOULD NOT UNDERSTAND ANY INDICATION THAT FRENCH FORCES WERE NOT PREPARED TO PROTECT FRENCH CITIZENS.

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13. THE INDIAN OCEAN - THE SECRETARY REVIEWED RECENT US-SOVIET TALKS ON THE INDIAN OCEAN ALONG THE LINES OF STATE 301375. VANCE

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